

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## St. Gelasius Church

6401-09 S. Woodlawn Ave.

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**Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by  
the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, September 4, 2003**



**CITY OF CHICAGO  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development  
Alicia Mazur Berg, Commissioner**



**Cover:** St. Gelasius Church is a handsome Renaissance Revival-style building with a visually striking bell tower (left). The building is detailed with finely crafted stone ornament, including (right top) acanthus leaf-embellished capitals and (right bottom) a medallion bearing a carved image of the building itself.

**Above:** The St. Gelasius Church building is located on the southeast corner of S. Woodlawn Ave. and E. 64th St. in the Woodlawn neighborhood on Chicago's South Side.

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.*

*The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

# ST. GELASIUS CHURCH

(ORIGINALLY ST. CLARA CHURCH)

6401-09 S. WOODLAWN AVE.

**BUILT:** 1923-1928  
**ARCHITECTS:** HENRY J. SCHLACKS

Historic church and synagogue buildings are often important visual anchors for Chicago's neighborhoods, with their monumental scale, prominent siting, elaborate architectural design and fine detail in marked contrast to typically smaller and less ornate surrounding neighborhood residential and commercial buildings. St. Gelasius Church, a Roman Catholic church building located in the South Side neighborhood of Woodlawn, has been a visual "landmark" in that community for 80 years.

Originally known as St. Clara Church, St. Gelasius Church is a visually impressive church building in the Renaissance Revival style, boasting finely-scaled facades embellished with Classical columns, door and window surrounds, low-relief sculpture, free-standing rooftop statues, and 120-foot-high bell tower. The Classical architecture of ancient Greece and Rome, along with its reinterpretations in Italy, France, England, and Germany during the 15<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, became the basis for several inter-related revivalist architectural styles, including the Renaissance Revival, that were important in the United States in general and Chicago in particular during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Influential buildings such as the Boston Public Library (1888-95, McKim, Mead, & White) and those making up the grandly-scaled 1894 World's Columbian Exposition here in Chicago encouraged an "American Renaissance" that saw the construction of impressive classically-inspired buildings for American government agencies, libraries, museums, and churches through the 1920s. In Chicago, the Renaissance

Revival style was especially important in its use for several prominent churches, including St. Gelasius, reflecting the style's associations with both the origins and development of large-scale church architecture in Italy and the long-time use of classically-inspired architecture for Roman Catholic churches both in Europe and the United States.

The St. Gelasius Church building is the work of architect Henry J. Schlacks, a noted Chicago designer of churches and other religious buildings. During a career that spanned four decades, Schlacks designed more than two dozen churches, including some of Chicago's finest. Chicago church historian Edward R. Kantowicz considered Schlacks "the master of Catholic church architecture in Chicago" for the beauty of his buildings, designing impressive structures for, among others, St. Paul, St. Mary of the Lake, St. Adalbert, St. Henry, St. Boniface, St. Ignatius, and St. Ita churches.

## **BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago grew rapidly, building numerous new churches to serve the city's fast-growing Catholic population. St. Clara Church (the original name for St. Gelasius) was founded in 1894 to serve the Woodlawn community, which was rapidly developing during the early 1890s.

Woodlawn, bounded by E. 60<sup>th</sup> St. and the Midway Plaisance to the north, Lake Michigan to the east, E. 67<sup>th</sup> St. to the south, and S. King Dr. to the west, was an unprepossessing mix of low-lying marsh and heavily-wooded forest when European settlers began farming in the area in the 1850s. Despite the construction of an Illinois Central railroad station at 63<sup>rd</sup> St. in 1862, Woodlawn remained a sparsely-inhabited area until 1889, when rapidly growing Chicago annexed it as part of its acquisition of the larger Town of Hyde Park. The subsequent announcement of the upcoming World's Columbian Exposition, to be held in Jackson Park on the eastern edge of Woodlawn, coupled with the construction of an elevated railroad connecting the fair grounds with Chicago's downtown, encouraged the almost overnight development of the area with stores, apartment buildings, and hotels. In addition, the 1892 opening of the University of Chicago, located just north of Woodlawn in the neighboring Hyde Park community, provided an ongoing institutional anchor for the newly developing neighborhood. By 1894 when the fair was held, Woodlawn was an established middle-class community of 20,000 residents.

As part of this larger neighborhood development, St. Clara Church was created as a "national" parish to serve German-speaking Catholics in Woodlawn and neighboring communities. Beginning in the 1850s, the Archdiocese of Chicago began organizing national parishes in neighborhoods where communities of non-English-speaking Catholics settled. In national parish churches, ethnic languages were spoken and old-world traditions were preserved in new-world surroundings. These churches often existed near "territorial" churches which served English-speaking Catholics of any background. Early important national parishes in Chicago included St. Patrick Church (700 W. Adams St.), founded for the Irish community on the Near West Side, and St. Michael







Above: Originally known as St. Clara Church, the present-day St. Gelsius Church replaced a smaller, simpler brick church-school building in 1923. Right: The cornerstone laying of the church building on October 14, 1923, was witnessed by 20,000 spectators.



Church (455 W. Eugenie St.), which served the largely German Old Town neighborhood on the Near North Side. St. Clara was a national parish until 1910, when territorial boundaries were established for the parish.

In its first 30 years of growth, St. Clara Church occupied three church buildings. The first temporary sanctuary was located in 1894 in a rented storefront near E. 69<sup>th</sup> St. and S. Stony Island Ave. The following year a more permanent church building was constructed on the southeast corner of E. 64<sup>th</sup> St. and S. Woodlawn Ave. on property donated to the parish. This building, a modest two-story brick building housing a school on the first floor and a sanctuary above, served until 1923, when it was replaced by the present-day church building. The cornerstone laying for the new church took place on October 14, 1923, witnessed by 20,000 spectators. The church's first Mass was celebrated on Christmas Day, 1924, although the building was not dedicated until 1927 (in a ceremony led by Chicago Archbishop George Cardinal Mundelein) or completely finished until 1928.

The new St. Clara Church was clad of gray Indiana limestone on all elevations and designed in the Renaissance Revival style, based on 15<sup>th</sup>- and 16<sup>th</sup>-century Italian architecture. It is a "basilica-plan" church building, rectangular in overall form and with a high-ceilinged rectangular "nave," or sanctuary, as its main interior space. The building's slightly projecting main entrance is centered on the narrow facade, rising approximately 60 feet, that faces Woodlawn. Three primary entrances with wood-paneled doors are set within rectangular Classical surrounds decorated with egg-and-dart and leaf-and-dart Classical moldings. Above these doors are rectangular windows set within Renaissance-style surrounds flanked by low-relief scrolls and topped by triangular pediments. Both doors and windows are in turn set within large round arches placed between "engaged" columns, columns attached to the building wall. Ornamented with Composite capitals, these columns visually support a limestone Classical cornice and four parapet statues depicting four saints (St. Joachim, St. Anne, St. Joseph, and St. Gabriel), which stand in front of a round-arched parapet wall shielding from view the church's low-pitched gable roof. (All four of these saints are of historic importance to the Carmelite order, which had been given operation of the church by the Archdiocese of Chicago in 1908.) Low-relief sculptures depicting both an image of the church itself and Catholic imagery are located over secondary entrances at either end of the Woodlawn facade.

The north elevation facing 64<sup>th</sup> St. utilizes similar Classical detailing, including tall round-arched windows, Composite pilasters, and cornice. A transept, or cross-axis, extends out towards the street with a large round-arched window set under a "broken pediment" formed by the cornice. A secondary entrance, detailed with paneled doors and a carved stone surround similar to those on the Woodlawn elevation, is located to the left of the transept window. A surviving portion of a historic wrought-iron fence and two limestone support pillars also remain in front of the 64<sup>th</sup> St. facade. A strikingly tall, narrow bell tower rises approximately 120 feet at the building's corner, ornamented with round-arched openings, balustrades, and a variety of pilasters (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian) arranged in a manner based on Italian Renaissance architectural practice.

The church interior consisted of a large open nave originally wood-paneled with



**St. Gelasius Church was built in the Renaissance Revival style, based on the Classical architecture of Renaissance Italy. Right: The building's Woodlawn facade has changed very little since 1889, when this picture was taken. Below: The building is beautifully detailed with Classical columns, statues, cornice, and bell tower.**







**Bottom and left: The 64th Street facade of St. Gelasius Church is also finely finished with gray limestone ornamented with Classical details. Below: A portion of a historic wrought-iron fence remains next to the building's 64th Street entrance.**



Circassian walnut and topped with a gently arched and coffered plaster ceiling. A fire in April 1976 destroyed most original interior details and ornament. (The interior is not defined as a significant historical and architectural feature for the purpose of this designation.)

## **RENAISSANCE REVIVAL-STYLE CHURCHES IN CHICAGO**

Historically-derived architectural styles were an important defining visual characteristic of Chicago architecture during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and buildings designed in historic revivalist styles remain significant contributors to Chicago’s architectural heritage. Classicism—the general architectural style first developed in ancient Greece and Rome and refined by European Renaissance and Baroque architects—plays an especially important role in Chicago’s streetscapes, used to embellish many of the city’s most prominent cultural, institutional, and religious buildings.

Religious buildings, including churches, synagogues, mosques, and associated buildings such as rectories, convents, and parochial schools, are frequently noteworthy visual “landmarks” in Chicago neighborhoods. Their size and scale—often rising above consistently lower-rise residential and commercial buildings—and the elaborateness of their ornamental beauty are important components of the city’s architectural heritage. Many residents closely associate neighborhoods with the religious buildings located there, and these buildings form important visual anchors within these neighborhoods.

Beginning with the city’s earliest churches and synagogues, Chicagoans have sought to create beautiful religious buildings in a variety of architectural styles. The earliest church buildings in Chicago, built in the 1830s and 40s in the wake of the frontier settlement’s founding, were mostly wooden buildings built in the Greek Revival style with austere Classical porticos and pointed steeples. Beginning in the 1850s, the Gothic Revival style became popular due to its historic associations with the great medieval cathedrals built in Europe from the 12<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. Through the rest of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and extending into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, brick and stone churches built in the Gothic Revival and other medieval-inspired styles such as Romanesque Revival remained popular. In addition, different religious faiths, and even ethnic groups within these faiths, often preferred certain architectural styles for their buildings.

The popularity of classically-inspired church buildings, including those built in the Renaissance Revival style such as St. Gelasius, increased dramatically in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as America began increasingly enamored with grand Classical architecture based on Renaissance precedents. Buildings such as the brownstone row house complex for Henry Villard (1882-85) on New York’s Madison Avenue, the Boston Public Library (1888-95), and Judson Memorial Church on New York’s Washington Square (1888-93) all by prominent New York architects McKim, Mead, & White, were early expressions of this change in architectural taste. In addition, the elaborate Classical style of the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1894, was a watershed event in American architecture and generated great and widespread enthusiasm for Classical architectural styles throughout the United States. Such buildings reflect the flowering of cultural achievement, economic prosperity, and world influence



The Renaissance Revival style, used for St. Gelasius Church, became popular in the United States in the late 19th century for high-style religious, institutional, and government buildings. Early influential examples of the style include: (above) the Boston Public Library and (left) New York's Judson Memorial Church, both begun in 1888 and designed by the prestigious New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead, & White. Below: The popularity of the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, was a watershed event in the spread of Classical architecture throughout the United States.





In Chicago, Classical architectural styles, including the Renaissance Revival, were popular in the early 20th century for churches and synagogues. Along with St. Gelasius Church, prominent examples include: (below) the former K.A.M. Synagogue on S. Drexel Blvd.; (right) Holy Cross Church on W. 46th St.; and (bottom) St. Mary of the Angels Church on N. Hermitage Ave.



in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that has been popularly called “the American Renaissance.”

The Renaissance Revival style was particularly important in the design of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century church buildings. Both church hierarchies and architects increasingly saw Classical architecture as a significant style for churches and related religious buildings. Christianity’s early history, rooted in the Classical culture of ancient Rome, and the great Christian churches of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries that were the earliest grand architectural expressions of this religious faith made Classicism seem both rationally and emotionally appropriate for modern church buildings. Classicism’s rebirth as the architectural style of choice for 15<sup>th</sup>-century Italian Renaissance church buildings and its subsequent importance for church architecture during the next four centuries solidified these important associations with Christianity.

In Chicago, a number of significant churches and synagogues were built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries using Classical architectural styles. One of the oldest surviving of note is the First Church of Christ, Scientist (now Grant Memorial A.M.E. Church), located at 4017 S. Drexel Blvd. and built in 1897 to a design by Solon S. Beman. Other prominent examples include Holy Cross Church at 1736 W. 46<sup>th</sup> St. (1913-15; Joseph Molitor); Corpus Christi Church at 4900 S. King Dr. (1914-16; Joseph W. McCarthy); St. Mary of the Angels Church at 1850 N. Hermitage Ave. (1914-20; Worthmann & Steinbach); and the former K.A.M. Synagogue now occupied by Operation PUSH, located at 4945 S. Drexel Blvd. (1923-24; Newhouse and Bernham). St. Gelasius Church is a fine example of this significant architectural movement, reflecting in its overall form and details this American interest and appreciation of Classical architecture.

## ARCHITECT HENRY J. SCHLACKS

The architect of St. Gelasius Church, **Henry John Schlacks (1867-1938)**, was one of Chicago’s most prominent church architects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period of tremendous growth for the city’s neighborhoods and the construction of churches. Born to German parents in Chicago, Schlacks attended St. Peter School before working as a draftsman for the noted architectural firm of Adler & Sullivan. He then received two years of architectural education at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, America’s premier architectural school in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, followed by extensive travel in Europe, observing first-hand historic buildings, including churches, that would inspire his later practice. Upon his return to Chicago, he entered into a partnership with fellow architect Henry Ottenheimer, also a former Adler & Sullivan draftsman, in 1891. Four years later in 1895, Schlacks began solo practice.

Although Schlacks designed a variety of building types during his career, he soon became known as a specialist in ecclesiastical architecture. In “To Build the Catholic City,” author Edward R. Kantowicz called Schlacks “the master of Catholic church architecture in Chicago.” One of Schlacks’ first jobs was as supervising architect for St. Martin Church at 5848 S.

Princeton Ave. Built in 1894-95 as a German national parish for the newly annexed Englewood community, St. Martin was a finely crafted, dramatically scaled church built in the style of German Gothic churches. Architect Louis A. Becker of Mainz, Germany, is credited with the overall conceptual design while Schlacks was the local architect of record, executing working drawings and supervising construction.

This early work led to Schlacks receiving numerous commissions over the next decade for churches and other parish buildings for German national parishes in Chicago and its suburbs. He became noteworthy for the architectural quality and individuality of his designs. His first major church commission following the completion of St. Martin Church was St. Peter Church (1895), a simple brick church located in then rural Niles Center (now Skokie) that was modeled after small-scale Gothic churches in German towns. St. Paul Church (2234 S. Hoyne Ave.; 1897-98), although also built of brick and based on German Gothic precedents, was gigantic in scale, its twin spires towering over its low-scale, working-class Lower West Side community. St. Boniface Church (1348 W. Chestnut St.; 1902-04) and St. Anthony Church (2849 S. Wallace St.; 1913-15) were handsome, if smaller in scale, examples of fine brickwork often typical of the Romanesque Revival style. The former St. Henry Church (6360 N. Ridge Ave.; 1905-06; now Angel Guardian Croatian Catholic Church) is a spectacular red-brick and green-copper presence in the West Ridge community area, rising beside a small cemetery on an ancient ridge left behind by the prehistoric water levels of Lake Michigan.

The quality of Schlacks' work with German national parish churches led in the 1910s and 20s to opportunities to design church buildings for several non-German parishes. It was at this time that he also largely turned from medieval styles (Gothic and Romanesque Revivals) to the Renaissance Revival style, a style that he personally had favored since his post-MIT days exploring the Classical and Renaissance buildings of Rome. St. Mary of the Lake Church (4200 N. Sheridan Rd.; 1913-17), a wealthy Uptown parish, received a buff-colored terra-cotta and brick church modeled in part after the Church of St. Prudentiana and the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Wall, both in Rome. St. Adalbert Church (1656 W. 17<sup>th</sup> St.; 1912-14), in the Pilsen neighborhood, and St. John of God Church (1238 W. 52<sup>nd</sup> St.; 1918-20), overlooking Sherman Park in Chicago's Back-of-the-Yards community, were two predominantly Polish parishes that both received large-scale Classical church buildings with entrance colonnades and twin Baroque-style bell towers. St. Ignatius Church (6555 N. Glenwood Ave.; 1916-17), founded by the Jesuit order, was located two blocks from the newly established Loyola University in the Rogers Park neighborhood. In its austere Classicism, gray limestone cladding, and single tall bell tower, St. Ignatius is closest among Schlacks' works to his later St. Gelasius Church.

Schlacks' last Chicago church of note is St. Ita Church (5500 N. Broadway; 1924-27), a handsome French Gothic-inspired church in the North-Side Edgewater neighborhood. It is thought that Schlacks, in the design of St. Ita's, took heed of the wishes of Chicago Archbishop George Cardinal Mundelein, who favored the French Gothic style.

Although Schlacks was best known for his Chicago church designs, he also designed





**Top left: Henry J. Schlacks, the architect of St. Gelasius Church, was one of Chicago's most significant designers of church and associated religious buildings. Two of Schlacks' earliest important churches were: (top right) St. Martin Church, located on S. Princeton in the Englewood neighborhood; and (left) St. Paul Church on Chicago's Lower West Side, both designed in the Gothic Revival style.**



During the 1910s and 20s, Schlacks designed several elaborate church buildings besides St. Gelasius Church in the Renaissance Revival style, including: (top left) St. Ignatius Church; (top right) St. Adalbert Church; and (above right) St. Mary of the Lake Church. (Above left) Schlacks' last major church, St. Ita Church, saw the architect return to Gothic architecture for inspiration.

other buildings of note, including school buildings for St. Boniface and St. Paul churches, buildings for St. Mary's of Nazareth Hospital on W. Division St. (demolished) and St. Anthony Hospital (original building demolished), and the Guardian Angel German Catholic Orphan Asylum (demolished). Outside Chicago, he designed a number of buildings, including St. Edmund Church in Oak Park (188 S. Oak Park Ave.; 1908-10); the Chapel at Mount St. Joseph College in Dubuque, Iowa; and railroad stations in Springfield, Ohio; Mt. Carmel, Illinois; Grand Junction, Colorado; and Salt Lake City, Utah.

## **LATER HISTORY**

St. Gelasius Church, under its original name of St. Clara, prospered for many years after its first religious service in 1924 and dedication in 1927. As the Woodlawn neighborhood began to change from predominantly white to African-American in the 1950s and 60s, however, the church began to see its membership rolls dwindle. In 1969, nearby St. Cyril Church, established in 1904 and also run by the Carmelite order, was merged with St. Clara to form St. Clara-St. Cyril Church, which then was housed in the former St. Clara Church building.

In April 1976, a fire destroyed significant interior features of the building, including the sanctuary's wood-paneled walls, coffered ceiling, and other details, although the building was repaired and continued to be used. In 1990 St. Clara-St. Cyril was merged with a nearby closing Catholic church, Holy Cross Church at 836 E. 65<sup>th</sup> St. At that time the new consolidated parish was named St. Gelasius in honor of a late 5<sup>th</sup>-century pope of African descent, Gelasius I, who ruled from A.D. 492 to 496. Citing declining parish membership, the Archdiocese of Chicago closed St. Gelasius Church in June 2002, and the building remains vacant.

The St. Gelasius Church building was color-coded "orange" in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey. It also was discussed in George A. Lane's *Chicago Churches and Synagogues*.

## **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the St. Gelasius Church building be designated as a Chicago Landmark.



### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois or the United States.*

- The St. Gelasius Church building exemplifies Chicago's contribution to the late 19th- and early 20th-century architectural revival of grandly-scaled Classicism, commonly referred to as the "American Renaissance," popularized by the World Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.
- The St. Gelasius Church building exemplifies the critical role that churches and other religious institutions played in the history and development of Chicago's neighborhoods in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The St. Gelasius Church building is a significant and distinctive example of ecclesiastical architecture and of a building type of importance to the visual character of Chicago's neighborhoods.
- The building is a significant and high-quality example of a Renaissance Revival-style building, an architectural style of importance to the history of Chicago in general and to the City's ecclesiastical architecture in particular.
- The building is distinguished by handsome craftsmanship and use of materials, including limestone, used for particularly fine Classical details such as tall engaged columns, Composite capitals, low-relief and free-standing sculpture, and bell tower.

### ***Criterion 5: Important Architect***

*Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.*

- Henry J. Schlacks, the architect of the St. Gelasius Church building, was one of Chicago's most prolific and important architects of churches and related religious buildings in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, designing over two dozen in Chicago and its suburbs.
- Besides St. Gelasius, Schlacks designed many important church buildings for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, including St. Paul, St. Mary of the Lake, St. Adalbert, St. Ignatius, St. Henry, St. Boniface, St. John of God, and St. Ita churches.



The St. Gelasius Church building is finely and elaborately ornamented with Classical decoration. (Above) Its Woodlawn facade has elaborate paneled doors set within round arches framed by massive Composite columns. (Top left) A detail of the Renaissance-style details found around windows. (Top right) A detail of the building's cornice and acanthus-leaf-ornamented column capitals.

(Top right) St. Gelasius's bell tower is detailed with a variety of Classical pilasters, including Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The building's facade is finely ornamented with Classical sculptures, including: (left top and bottom) statues of saints, and (bottom right) a stone medallion carved with an image of the church.





### ***Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature***

*Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.*

- With its distinctive 120-foot-high bell tower, St. Gelasius Church has been an established and familiar visual feature in the Woodlawn community since its construction in the 1920s.

### ***Integrity Criteria***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

St. Gelasius Church possesses excellent exterior physical integrity, displaying through its siting, scale and overall design its historic relationship to the surrounding area. It retains its historic overall exterior form and almost all exterior materials and detailing, including historic doors and carved-stone Classical columns, door and window surrounds, low-relief and free-standing sculpture, and bell tower.

Changes to the building's exterior include newer metal front step railings, the addition of a wheelchair-accessible ramp on the Woodlawn Ave. facade, and the loss of most of a historic wrought-iron fence along the building's 64<sup>th</sup> St. elevation.

The church's interior was gutted by a fire in April 1976 and does not retain significant historic features or detailing on the interior. The interior is not considered a significant historical or architectural feature for the purpose of this designation.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

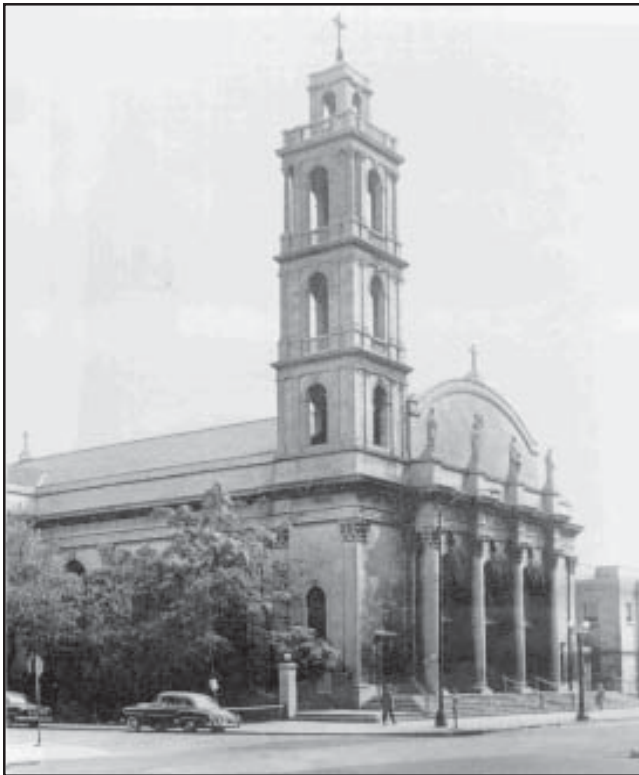
Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the St. Gelasius Church building, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building; and
- the remaining portions of the historic wrought iron-and-limestone fence along E. 64th St.



The St. Gelasius Church building retains its historic exterior physical integrity, including its original site, overall form, and the majority of details. (Top) The building at the time of its dedication in 1927. (Above) The building in 1989.



**(Top left) The St. Gelasius Church building in 1961. (Top right and above) The building in August 2003. The St. Gelasius Church building, with its distinctive and prominent bell tower, is an important visual anchor for the Woodlawn neighborhood.**



The designation does not include the attached gray limestone rectory building located south of the church building at 6415 S. Woodlawn Ave. nor the attached red brick school building located behind the rectory building.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### Illustrations

Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division: cover, pp. 3, 6 (bottom), 7, 17, 18, 21 (top right & bottom).

From St. Clara Carmelite Church, *Golden Jubilee*: p. 4.

From Wilson, *McKim, Mead, and White, Architects*: p. 9 (top & bottom).

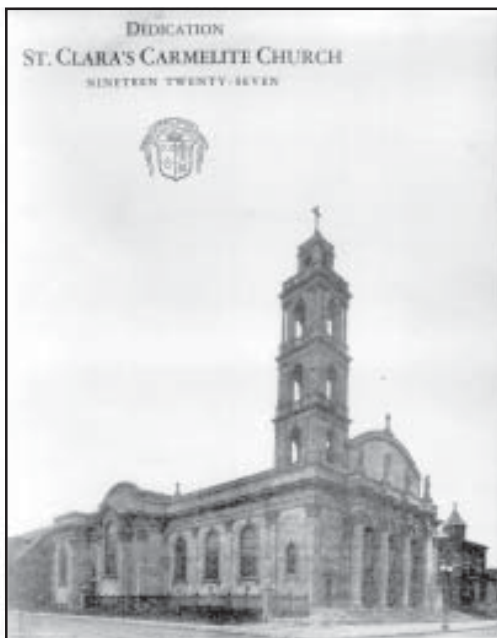
From Roth, *McKim, Mead, & White, Architects*: p. 9 (middle).

Chicago Historic Resources Survey: p. 6, 10, 14, 20 (bottom).

From St. Clara Carmelite Church, *Dedication*: p. 13 (top left), 20 (top), 22.

From Schlacks, *The Work of Henry John Schlacks, Ecclesiologist*: p. 13 (top right, bottom).

Chicago Historical Society, Prints & Photographs Collection: p. 21 (top left).



The cover of the 1927 dedication booklet for St. Gelasius Church (then known as St. Clara Church).

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